

Mutual Aid and Cooperatives

195

gain, for the proverbs say: "agreement is law"; "one ties the oxen by the horns, the man by his word." But the rugged individualists can also quote proverbs to show the dangers of depending upon others: "better a threshing floor small but your own"; "the donkey owned in common is eaten by the dogs"; "the wolf has a thick neck because he has to work alone." 476 539

Perhaps the simplest form of mutual aid is found in the case of two farmers, each of whom possesses but a single animal. They take turns using both animals to pull a plow or to do some other task where a team is needed. These partners are often called *smichtes* or *sebrol*. The Yannes described in an earlier chapter, who was disconsolately waiting for his partner to finish with his horse so that he could take the team to his own fields, was engaged in this kind of mutual aid. In Epirus, for instance, those with a single animal are called *monovodol* (or single-oxen farmers), and each tries to join up with someone else in order to have a team available when needed. Similarly, someone with a donkey or two lends his animals to another farmer who needs to haul his cereal or hay from the fields or to market, in the expectation that he will have the use of the borrower's animals when in similar need. 476 492

Somewhat more complex in detail but similar in type are the arrangements that shepherds make concerning the care of their flocks and the distribution of the produce, which was mentioned earlier in the description of the changing life of the shepherd. 476 233

Mutual aid also extends to the exchange of agricultural labor, as in the case of the potato diggers. It can also occur between two families who throughout the work season combine their labor resources, culminating in tremendous output at harvest time. Or labor can be repaid by some other kind of service, as was the case in Malakassa (Attica), where the president of the commune went to the coffeehouse and said that he needed some help in harvesting a crop. Sixteen men from the coffeehouse went along to aid. When we asked the coffeehouse proprietor what these men would receive in return we were told, "The president has a cart and will help each of these men haul in stuff from their fields when they need him." 476 241 [493]

But there are times when much help is needed for some special event which does not recur frequently in the life of an individual family. Here the traditional "working bee" is assembled. For example, a family decides to plant a new vineyard or to put up some kind of a building. It calls upon its neighbors and relatives for help, feeds them well, and eventually pays back the labor provided when called upon by those who contributed. We found mutual-aid groups also busy making cheese for their own use and for sale or digging clay which they worked into home-made brick. 476 [339]

Women, however, seem to be more fully involved in a wide variety of mutual-aid arrangements. They may help each other with certain household chores — carding wool, baking bread, carrying fuel (*pournari*) 573